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SUBJECT: PRT SALAH AD DIN: SALAH AD DIN CLAMORS FOR
ELECTIONS

Classified By: Classified By PRT Leader Rick Bell for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) This is a PRT Tikrit, Salah ad Din reporting cable.

¶2. (C) Summary: With the withdrawal of the veto of the Provincial Powers Law by the Presidency Council, Salah Ad Din leaders, as well as the public, are enthusiastically anticipating provincial elections. Interlocutors almost without exception say that elections, if and only if conducted on the open list system, will go a long way toward correcting imbalances resulting from the Sunni boycott of the previous elections in January 2005. End Summary.

¶3. (C) With the withdrawal of the Presidency Council veto of the Provincial Powers Law, the residents and leaders of Salah ad Din (SaD) are enthusiastically anticipating provincial elections. However, without prompting, expressions of excitement come with the caveat that the elections must proceed on the basis of an open list system. A broad range of SaD PRT contacts blame the previous closed list system for the lack of accountability among elected leaders. Our interlocutors, especially those who do not hold office, say that they want to know whom to hold to account for perceived failures in the provision of basic services. The only voice in favor of a closed list election came from VP Hashimi's representative in the province, Ali Al Ajeenie. (Comment: Al Ajeenie's support for the closed list system is likely a matter of preserving the Baghdad-centric status quo as many in the province say that the Salah Ad Din representatives in the CoR do nothing for the province, never visit the province (which is true) and will not be re-elected. End Comment.)

Disproportionate Representation in the Current PC

¶4. (C) The consequences of the Sunni boycott are starkly demonstrated by the disproportionate representation in the current Provincial Council (PC), with the ethnically unrepresentative and geographically distant district of Tuz holding 40 percent of the seats, while the districts of Samarra and Ad Dawr have no seats. The challenges faced by Samarra in gaining support for and coordination with the provincial capital in Tikrit is due in no small measure to the absence of Samarrans on the PC. Additionally, the sizable "Tuz Bloc" has used their clout to garner a much greater share of provincial funding for Tuz than its population would logically warrant.

¶5. (C) The boycott has also bred resentment directed at the Al-Juboori tribe, which did not participate in the boycott and holds most of the key provincial leadership positions and about 40 percent of the seats in the PC.

Political Jockeying Just Starting

¶6. (C) Given the lack of an election law, most politicians

have only just begun to jockey for position. Deputy Governor Abdullah is apparently pounding the pavement for his as yet unofficial "New Baath Party." (Comment: The Deputy Governor has not yet told PRTOFFS directly that he is forming this party and in a recent conversation called himself an independent. Other reporting indicates that he is indeed actively working on building this unfortunately named party. End Comment) Tawafuq bloc representatives in SaD told PRTOFF that they were well advanced in identifying two candidates from every district and were extremely confident that they do well in the election.

17. (C) Comment: Enthusiasm for elections is clear. There will be no repeat of the 2005 Sunni boycott. Local leaders, officials and ordinary people are beginning to see how important it is to lobby provincial officials and their experiences in doing so have given them a better understanding of how democracy works and how important representation is at the provincial level. They also understand that elections are the ultimate way of holding their elected officials accountable. End Comment
CROCKER